

As a constituent of Kevin Witkos' I was invited to comment on the issues of Common Core & teacher evaluation . My daughter is a high school English teacher in Connecticut with 20 years experience . I asked for her input, and the following is what she sent me . She also is in Kevin's district .

John Hooker
Canton, CT

The common core is just another educational trend (like No Child Left Behind) that will come and go. Honestly, for under-performing schools, it probably points them in the right direction. However, it does not take care of the real issues behind under-performance that nobody wants to talk about--lack of support at home because the parents are working, don't speak English and cannot communicate with the teachers, or simply don't care because they have fallen into a vicious cycle of poverty and despair; poverty itself (how can you expect a kid to concentrate in class when he hasn't eaten anything?); gangs. Most of these are problems with inner-city schools.

But, our kids consistently come back from their first year in college telling us that they were well prepared, so now with the common core, we just have more hoops to jump through to make sure that everything is being covered so everyone has a "common experience" when they get to college. Do they need that common experience if they are consistently performing well? If they know how to think and interpret information, write logically in a variety of styles, and present information in a variety of ways, then aren't they ready for higher education?

However, tying a teacher's evaluation performance to a standardized tests that the students take is utterly ridiculous and unfair. You are tying more than one third of a teacher's evaluation (40-45%) to how his/her students perform on **one day**. What if the kid is having a bad day? What if the kid isn't a good test taker (but can demonstrate competence in other ways)? What if the student doesn't like the teacher and uses doing poorly on a test as a way to "get back" at him or her? What if the students don't buy into testing period?

Now I have to spend more time teaching to the test to make sure that my kids will understand what types of questions they will be asked to solve. Not to mention that the design of the ELA test is flawed. If kids miss or do not understand what the main "premise" is of an article, then the next 4-5 questions become all guess work because they are based on that main idea. Teachers have been told time after time never to design a test where students will be set up to fail all for misunderstanding one question. Furthermore, on multiple choice questions where students are asked to select "all that apply," The question is not given any credit unless the student checks ALL of the correct answers. If the student could correctly identify 3 out of 4 of the correct choices, no partial credit is awarded for being 3/4 correct. It is entirely wrong.

If the state wants a true and fair evaluation of a teacher's performance, then evaluators need to be in the classroom to see the learning that occurs over a series of lessons, not just a quick informal drop in a few times a year for 10 minutes or one formal evaluation a year (or every three years as is being proposed now). Evaluators need to see how lessons develop and continue over several days and see the different types of strategies that a teacher employs to make learning occur in a classroom for students with different learning styles and varying levels of ability. This will also reveal the teacher's ability to establish a rapport with his or her students, a critical tool needed in getting students to work for you. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure that out or to see that a standardized test will never capture that aspect of a teacher's ability.

On Sat, Mar 8, 2014 at 11:27 AM, John Hooker <johncynh@aol.com> wrote:

If you want to send me your sentiments on this , I'll pass them along . I think I generally agree with you on Common Core and teacher evaluation . One can be a great teacher , but if the kids don't want to learn , for whatever reasons , and there are many , putting a heavy emphasis on student performance is no way to evaluate the teacher . Common Core is an issue I do not thoroughly understand . Some of it sounds reasonable , but I'm always suspicious of Federal govt. intervention in what should be a states rights issue .

-----Original Message-----


From: Kevin Witkos <kevin.witkos@cga.ct.gov>

To: johncynh <johncynh@aol.com>


Sent: Fri, Mar 7, 2014 4:12 pm

Subject: Your Chance to Be Heard on Common Core

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STATE SENATOR KEVIN WITKOS



Capitol Update

Your Chance to Be Heard on Common Core

I have heard from teachers, parents, administrators and students who have raised questions about the implementation of the so-called Common Core education curriculum and new teacher evaluation process.

You now have an opportunity to speak out.

The legislature's Education Committee will hold a public hearing on Wednesday, March 12 at 12:00 PM in Room 1E of the Legislative Office Building.

Among the bills being heard are:

[H.B. No. 5078](#) AN ACT IMPOSING A MORATORIUM ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS.




[H.B. No. 5331](#) AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REVISIONS TO THE PEAC GUIDELINES.


You can email testimony on either of these bills to EDTestimony@cga.ct.gov . Please cc your testimony to me at kevin.witkos@cga.ct.gov. Put "Testimony" and the bill's number in the subject line of your email.

For those who can come to Hartford to testify in person, I look forward to seeing you. Written testimony will be accepted in Room 3100 of the LOB until 9:30 A.M. on March 12. Please submit 35 copies.

All testimony will be available at <http://cga.ct.gov/ed> .

Thank you!

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Sent by:
State Senator Kevin Witkos
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT. 06106

Senator Witkos represents the towns of:
Avon, Barkhamsted, Canton, Colebrook, Granby,
Hartland, Harwinton, New Hartford, Norfolk,
Simsbury and Torrington

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